

## Message Text

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20

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /034 W

----- 094900

R 181545Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7417

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, BC

SUBJECT: MORE ON SELEBI-PIKWE STRIKE

REF: GABORONE 1715

1. DECEMBER 18 BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS CARRIES FRONT-PAGE STORY ON JULY SELEBI-PIKWE STRIKE ENTITLED "INSIGATORS BLAMED FOR MASS DISMISSALS." ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, MONAMESE LESHONA, SELEBI-PIKWE MINE WORKERS

UNION (MWU) CHAIRMAN, HAS CALLED MACHINE OPERATORS AND OTHERS "INSTIGATORS" OF STRIKE BY IGNORING THE LEGAL UNION AND MAKING STRIKE ARRANGMENTS ON THEIR OWN. LESHONA ALSO LABELLED "IMPROPER AND SHAMEFUL" THE CONDUCT OF STRIKERS WHO JEERED VICE-PRESIDENT MASIRE WHEN HE TRIED TO ADDRESS THE MOB. THE MWU COMMITTEE IS HAVING DIFFICULTY IN ADDING MEMBERS, ACCORDING TO LESHONA, "FOR FEAR OF BEING BLAMED AND ARRESTED" FOR OTHERS' PREVIOUS ACTIONS.

2. COMMENT: LESHONA, WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF SELEBI-PIKWE BRANCH OF OPPOSITION BOTSWANA NATIONAL FRONT, WAS THOUGHT BY GOB TO HAVE BEEN BEHIND THE STRIKE. IN VIEW OF LESHONA'S RECENT ACQUITTAL ON RIOT CHARGES (REF) AND MODEL DEPORWMENT IN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GOB MAY BE RETHINKING CAUSES OF STRIKE. END COMMENT.

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3. PRESIDENT KHAMA PLANS TO TRAVEL TO SELBI-PIKWE TO ADDRESS  
BCL WORKERS ON DECEMBER 19 AND GENERAL PUBLIC ON DECEMBER 20.  
AALC DIRECTOR JOHN KILHEFNER, WHO FIRST INFORMED EMBASSY OF  
KHAMA'S SELEBI-PIKWE TRIP PLANS, CONJECTURES THAT KHAMA MAY  
NOW FEEL THAT HE OVERREACTED IN ALLOWING BAMANGWATO CONCESSIONS  
LIMITED (BCL) TO FIRE ALL WORKERS WHO DID NOT REPORT FOR DUTY  
ON DAY OF STRIKE. ACCORDING TO KILHEFNER, SUCH MASS FIRINGS  
WERE HASTY AND UNJUST BECAUSE PLANT WAS CLOSED ALL DAY AND  
SURROUNDED BY PICKETS, SOME OF WHOM WERE ARMED WITH CLUBS.  
UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, NO ONE, INCLUDING EXPATRIATE SUPERVISORS,  
WAS ABLE TO REPORT FOR WORK EXCEPT FOR SMALL GROUP ACCOMPANIED  
IN BY POLICE. GIVEN THE SUBSEQUENT COOLING OF PASSIONS,  
KILHEFNER THINKS KHAMA SPEECH WILL SEEK TO MODIFY EARLIER GOB  
POSITION AND WILL ALLOW WORKERS WHO WERE FIRED WITHOUT  
HAVING BEEN CHARGED WITH LEGAL OFFENSE TO CONTINUE TO PRESS  
POLICY GRIEVANCE WHICH THEY HAVE FILED WITH ASSISTANCE OF KILHEFNER  
AND BOTSWANA TRADE UNION EDUCATION CENTRE.  
THOMSEN

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